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AFGHANS FEAR NEW OFFENSIVE BY SOVIETS
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WASHINGTON

The Soviet Union is planning to "exploit the gap" between U.S. administrations later this year by launching a major new offensive against the guerrilla resistance in Afghanistan, according to an Afghan rebel spokesman.

Mohamad Nabi Salehi, Washington representative of the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen, said he believes the Soviets will try to "finish Afghanistan" with an increased campaign of "genocide and oppression."

But Salehi, who says his organization represents more than 60 percent of an estimated 100,000 Afghan guerrillas, vowed "the people of Afghanistan will fight for ever."

Salehi said he was particularly concerned about the implications for Afghanistan of a win by Walter Mondale in November's presidential elections.

Although the Democratic Party has pledged to support "the Afghan resistance with material assistance," Salehi believes Mondale has a "softer" approach to the Soviet Union than President Reagan.

"The present administration at least has a clear policy ... at least they are not pro-Russian," he said. "If Mondale is elected, it could be worse."

But his main fear was that Moscow would take advantage of the nearly three-month period between the election and the formation of a new administration at the end of January.

"The Russians will finish Afghanistan ... they will exploit the gap," said Salehi.

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and installed the pro-Moscow regime of President Babrak Karmal. Since then, an estimated 105,000 Soviet troops, together with the Afghan army, has battled up to 100,000 Afghan guerrillas.

Asked about reported CIA arms supplies to the Mujahideen fighters, Salehi said: "What we have received has been so pathetically inadequate and ineffective, it is a condemnation to slow death."

"The Afghan Mujahideen have been given only enough to fight and die but not enough to advance our cause of freedom," he said.

The Reagan administration officially denies supplying arms to the rebels, but news reports have documented the supply of arms. The Washington Post reported earlier this month that Congress had agreed to a further \$50 million in aid to the rebels.

It is widely believed the administration leaked details of the operation to avert international demands for U.S. action, while deliberately keeping the quality and quantity of arms too low to prompt a Soviet reprisal.

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